

3  
ENGLISH READINGS;

A

COMIC PIECE,

IN ONE ACT.

INSCRIBED TO

GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

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D U B L I N:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM PORTER,

FOR MESS. MONCRIEFFE, GILBERT, WILKINSON,  
COLLES, WOGAN, BEATTY, CHAMBER-  
LAINE, WILSON, WHITE, BYRNE,  
W. PORTER, SLEATER, COL-  
BERT, HALPIN, LEWIS,  
MOORE, JONES, AND  
DORNIN.

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M DCC LXXXIII



**A**MONG the Performers to whom the Author of the following Dramatic Sketch esteems himself obliged for their Endeavours to promote its Success, MR. BANNISTER, Junior, MR. WEWITZER, MR. MOSS, and MRS. WEBB, are entitled to his particular Thanks.

Mr. COLMAN's Conduct respecting this little Piece is its own Panegyric. The first Scenes were sent to that Gentleman anonymously: He deemed them not destitute of Merit, and therefore encouraged the Author to compleat the rest. Mr. COLMAN has since devoted the utmost Care and Attention to prepare this Piece for Representation; and, in short, has interested himself warmly in its Success, though the Author remains unknown to him.



## Dramatis Personæ.

Bootekin	— —	Mr. Moss.
Bob Bootekin	—	Mr. BANNISTER, Jr.
Stately	— —	Mr. WEWITZER.
Spatula	— —	Mr. JOHNSON.
Dismal	— —	Mr. BARRETT.
Captain Wilmot	—	Mr. LAWRENCE.
Mrs. Poplin	—	Mrs. WEBB.
Charlotte	— —	Miss FRANCIS.
Kitty	— —	Miss BRANGIN.

*N. B.* The Passages marked with double inverted Commas, thus “ ”, are omitted in the Representation.

ENGLISH





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A

## COMIC PIECE. ]

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SCENE. *A Room in BOOTEKIN'S House.*

KITTY and Capt. WILMOT.

Kitty. **P**RAY let me alone, Captain Wilmot—you forget that you are making love to me instead of my mistress.

“Capt. Wilmot. Why faith, Kitty, your  
“beauty is so much the type of my dear  
“Charlotte’s, that, like a Roman Catholic, I  
“almost adore the *image* for its likeness to the  
“*saint*.”

“Kitty. Well,” let us leave fooling—and  
consider how you are to secure Miss Charlotte  
—You find her father, old Bootekin, is resolv-  
ed to marry her to his nephew Bob.

A 3

Capt.

*Capt. Wilmot.* I think I have a scheme to prevent that.—But tell me, Kitty, how did this rage for English Readings reach a town so far from London?

*Kitty.* Mrs. Poplin, the Irish mantua-maker, who came down from London introduced it—You know from the moment that my master quitted business, as a shoe-maker in town, and came down here to live on his means, Mrs. Poplin and he cou'd never set their horses together.

*Capt. Wilmot.* I think they quarrel'd who shou'd have the best pew at church.

*Kitty.* And ever since have been at open war.—Mrs. Poplin took the field by giving a ball; and tho' old Bootekin hates the sound of a fiddle, he let all the heavy-heel'd rustics in the neighbourhood *right hand and left* in our hall, till they made the house shake to its foundation.—Next, the ladies had card-parties;—determined not to be behind-hand, the old man quitted his pipe and bottle (for *Loa* and *Pope Joan*.)

*Capt. Wilmot.* And now the whim of burlesquing a rational and elegant amusement—giving *Readings*, has seiz'd her ladyship—he is to have the same on a more extensive scale of absurdity—“as if resolv'd that all his follies, like the shadows of her's, shall not only keep pace with, but become larger than the originals.”

*Enter*

*Enter CHARLOTTE.*

Well, my dear Charlotte, what news?

*Charlotte.* My father has just told me that I am to marry my hopeful cousin, Bob Bootekin, next week.

*Capt. Wilmot.* How unfortunate!

*Charlotte.* How *fortunate* you mean—if he had left my choice free, ten to one if I should have come to a resolution for this twelvemonth; but an attempt to force my inclinations drives me to a determination at once.

*Capt. Wilmot.* Charming Charlotte!

*Kitty.* Take her at her word, Sir.—The captain has got a ring and licence in his pocket, ma'am.

*Charlotte.* Aye—but then I shall be so closely watch'd."

*Capt. Wilmot.* I'll contrive to put them off the guard, and make this scheme of the *Readings* turn to our advantage—"if we can but persuade your father to alter the place of exhibition from his own house to the large room at the George Inn."

*Kitty.* Hush!—Lud, Miss Charlotte, here comes your father—and that booby, Dismal.

*Capt. Wilmot.* Then I must e'en quit the field—but while I can carry off so charming a prize, retreat is victory.

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter*



*Enter BOOTEKIN and DISMAL.*

*Bootekin.* Hold your tongue, firrah!—and don't contradict me—you know I can't bear opposition.

*Dismal.* Well, master, I have done—I'll say no more.

*Bootekin.* But what signifies your *saying* no more—your cursed inflexible countenance has contradiction in every feature.—When I liv'd in London, I dreaded your appearance in the shop—the very sight of you put my customers in ill humour—and they then were sure to swear their shoes did not fit 'em.

*Dismal.* O Lud! O Lud!

*Bootekin.* How often have I strapp'd you round the shop to cure your sour aspect?

*Dismal.* I remember it as well as if it was yesterday."

*Bootekin.* " And yet, egad, let me strap you ever so often, I could never make you look pleasant—But" pray now let us know, good Mr. Dismal, what are your objections to my *Readings*?

*Dismal.* For my part I never knew, till now, that you was so given to reading.

*Bootekin.* No more I an't—I never read but two books in my life—my *cash-book*, and my *journal*—but I'm resolved to like reading now, from

from mere opposition—What the devil, an't I a better gentleman, by a *hundred* a year, than any man in the neighbourhood?—and shall a poultry mantua-maker—a walking *pin-cushion*—a *remnant* of old tabby, pretend to give *Readings*, when I hardly know whether I can read or not?

*Dismal.* She'll be too many for you yet—  
“ she vows she'll have the best *pew* at church  
“ to herself.”

*Bootekin.* I tell you she shan't.—What a  
“ provoking dog it is!”

*Dismal.* The first time she can catch you absent from church, depend on't she'll fill the pew with her own family, and hang her footboy's hat upon your peg.

*Bootekin.* I will not be absent, I tell you.

*Dismal.* Suppose you should be taken ill.

*Bootekin.* But I *won't* be taken ill.

*Dismal.* But how can you help it?—She  
“ will certainly have the pew.”

*Bootekin.* 'Sblood! I'll go to church on  
“ Sunday-morning and afternoon, besides pray'r-  
“ days, I'll be *damn'd* if I don't.”

*Dismal.* Well—well—I hope all will turn out for the best—but suppose—

*Bootekin.* Zounds! I'll suppose nothing—  
Out of the room directly.

[*Pushing him.*]

*Dismal.*

*Dismal.* Perhaps you'll think of my words.

*Bootekin* [*pushes him out*] Not if I can help it—they always give me the vapours.

*Enter KITTY.*

*Kitty.* Sir, there is Mr. Stately, the great lawyer, come to pay you a visit—he is just getting off his horse.

*Bootekin.* Odd's so, Mr. Stately I—shew him up directly—Bless me, I'm vastly glad he's come,—[*Exit Kitty*] A formal old prig—has a scull with nothing in it but *pride*—and yet thinks all the world fools but himself—However, I expect something at his death, and so I must not quarrel with him.

*Enter STATELY.*

*Stately.* Mr. Bootekin, I rejoice to see you look so well—tho' indeed I don't wonder at it—when I consider that you take so much exercise—it will do you good—you have been used to it—being a working man, I mean to say.

*Bootekin.* My dear friend, I heartily thank you for what you mean to say.—Well, and how d'ye do?—I suppose you are pretty well—I'm heartily glad of it—and so much for compliments.—Now my dear Mr. Stately.—

“*Stately.* Perhaps I did not explain myself for you to understand me.”

“*Bootekin.*”



" *Bootekin.* Yes, you did—and so let us proceed to business."

*Stately.* Mr. Bootekin, your ideas are confused—tho', indeed, how shou'd you have ideas—do you know what an idea is?—it is—I'll tell you another time what it is—I studied the noble science of the law—it was at the bar I learnt to think.

*Bootekin.* Yes, you had leisure enough for *thinking* then—I believe you never had the trouble to *speak* at the bar in your life.

" *Stately.* *Explanation* was always my motto.

" *Bootekin.* [*Aside*] And it suits you just as badly as many other mottos suit those who adopt them."—I suppose you have heard how Mrs. Poplin has crow'd over me, because, forsooth, I can't jabber gibberish out of a printed book as fast as she can—how is it not—

*Stately.* Permit me to interrupt you—Reading you know—indeed I need not say *you* know—but *I* know—that reading—

*Bootekin.* Permit me to interrupt *you*—I only wish to ask you if my case is not a cursed hard one.—After working like a horse to get a fortune, I quitted business, and came down here to smoke a comfortable pipe—walk about the green fields—look at the trees, and enjoy the pleasure of doing nothing—Well, down I came," and bought a large estate here, to make myself respected—and respected  
I was—

I was—"was complimented on being made  
 "churchwarden immediately on my arrival,  
 "and gave a feast to the parish"—the parson  
 declared I spoke monstrous well at the vestry,  
 and liked my company so well that he has *dined*  
 with me three or four times a week—all my  
 letters came directed to Robert Bootekin, Es-  
 quire—and the member for the county shook  
 me by the hand last election, when he came  
 round to *canvass*.—"Nay, Sir Charles Courtly  
 "came down from London t'other day to dine  
 "with me, and apologize for not paying two  
 "hundred pounds he owes me."—Now I call  
*this* being respected.

*Stat. ly.* You may call it so, Mr. Bootekin—  
 you have not much idea of respect—He! He!  
 He!—I don't mean to offend you—but give  
 me leave to explain to you—it is my opini-  
 on—

*Bootekin.* Zounds! my dear friend, when  
 you were in the law did you give opinions be-  
 fore the *case* was *stated*?—I was going to tell  
 you, that since this Irish woman has set it  
 about the town that I'm a vulgar dog, egad  
 things begin to change—fellows in carters  
 frocks and hubnail'd shoes contradict me at  
 the vestry—the parson had the impudence to  
*preach* about the badness of my wine at my own  
 table—and, egad, nobody in the place bow to  
 me now but old women, and children, and that's  
 only when I give them halfpence—all because,  
 forsooth, I'm a vulgar fellow.—Zounds! how  
 can

can a man be vulgar with £.20,000 in his pocket?

*Stately.* Look ye, Mr. Bootekin—I knew you in London—you made shoes for me many years—you are a well-meaning man, and I have a regard for you—but you have been brought up in a low way—and your ideas are confin’d—He! he! he! “Your arguments are loud and heavy, like a *lap stone* dropt in a pond—they make a noise for a moment, and then sink in the mud—He! He! He!—sink in the mud.”——

*Bootekin.* “First raising circles in the pond, which, like your round-about explanations, become wider of the mark every moment, ’till at last they leave no trace of what occasioned them.” He! He! He! [*Imitating him.*]

*Stately.* Mr. Bootekin, you are ignoramus, as we say in the courts, and therefore—

*Bootekin.* I beg pardon, Mr. Stately—I was too warm.—[*Aside*] Egad, I shall lose the legacy.—[*To him*] I thank you much for the honour of this visit—this afternoon I give my Readings—I’ll convince you and all the world that I am not a vulgar fellow.

*Stately.* I shall be very happy to see it, Mr. Bootekin, He! He! He!—Pray, do you read yourself?—

*Bootekin.* No,—my nephew, Bob, to whom I gave my business, will read—he is a smart  
B lad,



lad, I assure you,—and very much of a gentleman, though *I* say it—[*Enter Kitty.*—Is Bob come home?

*Kitty.* This very moment, Sir—he desires to speak to you.

*Bootekin.* I'll introduce him to you, Mr. Stately, you'll be vastly pleased with him.

[*Exit.*

*Stately.* [*Aside*] A mighty pretty girl, i'faith!—My dear, you seem in a hurry.

*Kitty.* Had you any thing to say to me, Sir?

*Stately.* Why, yes, my dear, I should like to have something to say to you.—[*Aside*] If I could but tell what—but these girls are so apt to laugh at a middle-aged man, when he makes love to them, that I am half afraid to venture.—[*To her*] I suppose you have a sweetheart, my pretty maid?

*Kitty.* Dear Sir, what should there be about me for people to fall in love with me?

*Stately.* Oh! ho!—It will do [*To her*] Fall in love with you!—why, who could help it?—Come here, child—don't be afraid of *me*.

*Kitty.* Oh dear—no, Sir, I am not at all afraid of you—Ha! ha! ha!

*Stately.* [*Aside*] There—now it won't do—she begins to laugh—

*Kitty.* I am sure, Sir, you are too good-natur'd a gentleman.

*Stately.*

*Stately.* Yes, my dear, you'll find me so.—  
*[Aside]* Egad, it will do after all *[To her]* My  
 sweet little Kitty, will you favour me so far as  
 —to—*[Enter Bootekin and Bob Bootekin, who runs  
 up to Stately, and shakes him by the hand]*—to  
 tell 'em to give my horse some corn?—do, my  
 dear, go directly—*[Exit Kitty]*—*[Aside]* To  
 be interrupted in such an interesting situation!

*Bob.* Sir, I have the honour to be your  
 most obedient, devoted, very humble servant.

*Bootekin.* Mr. Stately, this is my nephew,  
 Bob.

*Stately.* Young man, I hear you are an ora-  
 tor, I suppose you have classical learning.

*Bob.* Classical learning!—Ho! ho! ho!  
 Bless your ignorance—why I went through all  
 the *classes*—but my genius was too great to  
 remember any thing I learnt at school.

*Stately.* I must explain to you, that without  
 classical learning genius is but a kind of—a  
 —a—

*Bob.* Aye, aye—you mean to say 'tis all  
 my eye.

*Stately.* All my eye!

*Bob.* Nay, if you like it, I'll take t'other  
 side of the question—'tis all the same to me—  
 I'll engage to speak on any thing for a quarter  
 of an hour at least—what say ye to that, old  
 gentleman?

*Bootekin.* Mr. Stately, pray excuse my nephew's freedom of speech, he! he!—[*Aside to Bob*] At him again, Bob.

*Bob.* I perceive, Sir, you have resided in the country lately—you must come to town and visit our disputing society—we have questions to suit every body, and I speak upon all questions.

*Stately.* No doubt, and with equal ability—but, pray Sir, don't you find it necessary, sometimes, to understand your subject?

*Bob.* Not at all, Sir—I am a natural speaker—never study, but say whatever comes uppermost;—my opinion is, that a speech is a speech, if there were but words enough in it—and I am allowed to have the knack of saying more in a given time than any speaker in the society.

*Stately.* I suppose you talk faster.

*Bob.* Exactly so, Sir.—But a-propos, I can give you a specimen or two of our questions—Let me see, where are my memorandums—Oh, here! The questions to be debated, as they stand in order on our list, are; First—Is war or peace best for this country?—we were favour'd with this question by a *navy agent*, and we expect it will produce a warm debate.—Second in the list stands the question, Whether the lady who has *black, blue, or grey eyes*, is likely to make the best wife?—

*Stately.*



*Stately.* A very instructive and amusing speculation—

*Bob.* Upon Charlotte's first introduction to Werter, did not she behave rather ungenteelly, in not offering him a dish of tea?

*Stately.* Very material to be ascertained.

*Bob.* The next—no, faith, the next question was debated last week, out of its turn, on account of its peculiar importance, and at the desire of several respectable members—

*Stately.* What may that be?

*Bob.* Is the tinker, the taylor, or the lamp-lighter, the most useful member of society?

“ *Stately.* And how might it have been de-  
“ termined?

“ *Bob.* Why, Sir—as our advertisement in  
“ the newspapers next day very properly stated  
“ —this question gave rise to a most import-  
“ ant and interesting debate, in which instructi-  
“ on was mingled with amusement.—The ar-  
“ guments were, from time to time, enliven'd  
“ by the most brilliant flashes of wit and humour  
“ from several gentlemen of the first-rate abi-  
“ lities, who honour'd the question with their  
“ attention—(by the bye, I was prodigiously  
“ great that night)—with their attention.—  
“ But the variety of material points which pre-  
“ sented for discussing protracting the debate to  
“ an unusual length, and the friends of the  
“ lamp-lighter (I supported him)—the friends

“ of the lamp-lighter wishing for an opportunity of answering the arguments of their opponents, the debate was adjourned till next week.”

*Stately.* And, pray, young Mr. Bootekin, do you never touch on politics?

*Bob.* Oh, yes, Sir,—politics are my forte—we had a most glorious debate the other day—Whether some great men ought not to lose their heads for not doing something?—but, egad, I forget what—however, I supported the question, and beat Dick Dah hollow, though he sported a dozen Latin mottos, which he stole from the *Spectators* and *Tatlers* the day before—I sat down amidst a thunder of applause from hands, feet and sticks:—in short, the minister totter’d—when, within ten minutes of the debate closing, in came a posse of treasury-runners, as we suspect, who by dint of coughing, laughing, and hooting, put a stop to the debate—a battle ensued between two ladies—the *moderator* flew into a violent passion—constables were sent—and the debate ended—

*Stately.* As most political disputes end—neither parties giving up the point.—Well, I must go and pay a few visits to some of my old acquaintance—and—

*Bootekin.* You’ll be back time enough for our Readings—what d’ ye think of Bob—is not his conversation vastly amusing?

*Stately.*

*Stately.* Oh, yes—like the bells of a team of horses, it makes a pleasant jingling noise, though there is no meaning in it—He! he! he!—I don't mean to be severe, I assure you.

[*Exit.*]

*Bob.* A stupid old put!

*Bootekin.* Stupid indeed!—I never knew him do but one sensible thing in his life—and that was putting his name down in his will.—But, Bob, you have not told me what preparations you have made for our Readings.

*Bob.* I have got you plenty of company, however—and that's the principal part of the business.

*Bootekin.* So it is—Well, and who are we to have, eh, Bob?

*Bob.* Faith, I don't know—they are of all sorts, like the county militia—however, you'll have enough of 'em—our great parlour will be so cramm'd that we shan't have room to stir.

*Bootekin.* Odd's my life, that will be comfortable—"we'll shew old Mother Poplin what a rich man can do, though he is a vulgar fellow."

"*Bob.* Nay, what's more, I have engag'd Sam Scrape, the fidler, to touch up his catgut a little between the Readings—and his son will sing."

"*Bootekin.* Thank you, my dear Bob!—"  
"Odso, I am so overjoy'd"—But what will  
"you



“ you read to them? suppose you give them a touch from Burn’s Justice, or the Parish Laws.

*Bob.* Oh Lord, no, uncle ;—here, I have made out the bill for the evening’s entertainment.

*Bootekin.* Let’s see it—why, what the devil is all this?—Overture for *two orchestras*—Sam Scrape.—John Gilpin from *Sterne*, by Mr. Bootekin.—‘ He gave them hail-stones for rain’—Grand chorus—by a young gentleman, accompanied on the fiddle by Sam Scrape.—Zounds! Bob, what the devil is this?

*Bob.* Fashion, Sir, fashion.

*Bootekin.* Fashion! — But what’s the reason?

*Bob.* Oh, Lord, Sir—reason has nothing to do with fashion.

*Enter WILMOT.*

*Wilmot.* Mr. Bootekin, your most obedient—I have great pleasure in waiting on you, with a message from a fair Lady—your neighbour, Mrs. Poplin.

*Bootekin.* A fig for Mrs. Poplin!—here’s Bob shall read with her for fifty pounds; ayé, and spell any word in the dictionary.

“ *Wilmot.* I don’t doubt it, Sir—I have  
“ every respect for the gentleman’s abilities;  
“ and,

“ and, I am sure, Mr. Bootekin, your candour and good sense will lead you to adopt  
 “ a scheme which will shew Mr. Robert  
 “ Bootekin’s superior talents to advantage.

“ *Bob.* Upon my soul, uncle, he seems to  
 “ be a mighty civil man.

“ *Bootekin.* [*Aside to Bob.*] Aye, Bob—and  
 “ talks very sensibly too.—[*To Wilmot*] Well,  
 “ Captain Wilmot.”

“ *Wilmot.* In short, Sir, Mrs. Poplin wishes  
 to enter into a treaty of amity with you, and  
 has named me her ambassador.

“ *Bootekin.* And so she has chosen you to negotiate a peace, because your trade is war—a devilish good choice of hers, and worthy of an Irish woman.

“ *Wilmot.* Vastly well, indeed, Mr. Bootekin—I am really charm’d with your wit.

“ *Bootekin.* Aye, but you must dine with  
 “ me, to taste my wit in perfection—I am told  
 “ I shine prodigiously at the head of my own  
 “ table—and, egad, I believe it to be so, for  
 “ people never laugh at my jokes half so much  
 “ as when they dine with me”—but I beg pardon, I interrupt you.

“ *Wilmot.* In a word, Sir, you know Mrs. Poplin gives Readings this evening in the great room at the George—she is willing to have a friendly trial of skill with your nephew; “ and  
 “ if he and you are equally desirous of it, she  
 “ invites

“ invites you to meet her there, and to bring all  
 “ your friends with you”—the room is large  
 enough to contain us all, and—

*Bob.* A dev’lish good thought, i’faith—I’ll  
 meet the lady, Captain—let her chuse her sub-  
 ject, from Johnny Gilpin up to Milton—prose,  
 rhyme, or blank verse, all the same to me—I  
 read ’em all alike.—Pray now, my dear uncle,  
 consent.

*Bootekin.* Well, Bob, please yourself, and  
 you’ll please me.

*Bob.* I’ll do more, I’ll please the whole com-  
 pany.—Captain, we’ll be with you—give me  
 your hand!

*Wilmot.* I see you are a lad of spirit—you’ll  
 live to be a great man—I see that.

*Bob.* What a glorious triumph!—I long for  
 the engagement:—the men will applaud me—  
 the women—I mean the *ladies*—will be in  
 raptures—such acclamations and bravoing, and  
 anchoring, from those who do understand me,  
 and those who don’t understand me!

*Bootekin.* Hey day, Bob!—

*Bob.* Such a delightful confusion—every bo-  
 dy clapping as if the devil was in ’em—and no-  
 body hearing a word I say—whilst *I*—bowing,  
 and out of breath—

*Bootekin.* Zounds! I wish you were out of  
 breath.

*Bob.*



*Bob.* Come along, uncle!—To the attack!  
—upon them!—charge!—the word St. George  
for England—huzza! [Exeunt.]

SCENE changes to a Room at the George Inn  
—*Servants are setting up the Benches, and  
lighting the Candles.*

MRS. POPLIN, WILMOT, and SPATULA.

*Mrs. Poplin.* And so this confated vulgar  
crature will attempt to *rade* with me, and  
make himself ridiculous!—I, who know these  
things!—faith and troth it will be mighty plea-  
sant—and I am extremely obligated to you,  
Captain Wilmot, for procuring me the enter-  
tainment.

*Wilmot.* My dear Mrs. Poplin, you owe  
me no thanks—the service is its own reward.  
[Exit.]

*Mrs. Poplin.* The *farvice* its own reward  
—Faith, and so it seems, by our being bo-  
ther'd so with the *wooden-legged* gentry—plagu-  
ing one at every corner for a *tirteener*.—What  
the divil are you so busy about there, Mr. Spa-  
tula?

*Spatula.* Fair idol of my soul, I am only  
snuffing the candles—you know they are my  
patients at present—you have put them under  
my *care*.

*Mrs. Poplin.* Mind you don't *sarve* 'em as  
you do some of your patients, Mr. Spatula—  
make

make a mistake, and snuff 'em out—However, I sha'nt want much light—whatever I am to read, I always larn first by heart; *because* d' ye see, there's no reading well while one looks at the book.

“ *Spatula.* True, thou matchless work of nature.—[*Aside.*] She's in a devilish good humour—now's my time to renew the attack.  
 “ —[*To her.*] May I hope, divine essence of beauty, that my love may kindle up a *passion* in your breast?

“ *Mrs. Poplin.* You may believe that, Mr. Spatula—you'll kindle up a divil of a *passion* in my breast presently, if I hear any more of your stuff.

“ *Spatula.* I hope not, bright excellence—  
 “ you are all mildness and condescension—con-  
 “ serve of roses and milk of sweet almonds—  
 “ thou cataplasm to my aching bosom—thou  
 “ styptic to my bleeding heart—thou sal volatile  
 “ to my fainting spirits.

“ *Mrs. Poplin.* What!

“ *Spatula.* You are a mixture of beauties,  
 “ compounded with perfection's best pestle and  
 “ mortar—a choice bolus of nature, gilded with  
 “ the accomplishments of art.

“ *Mrs. Poplin.* A bolus!

“ *Spatula.* Your charms comprehend the  
 “ whole circle of Cupid's *materia medica*—  
 “ and in short you are a walking dispensary of  
 “ love.

“ *Mrs.*

" *Mrs. Poplin.* And, I suppose, you think  
" this mighty fine now?

" *Spatula.* Your person.—

" *Mrs. Poplin.* You had better let my per-  
" son alone, Mr. Spatula.

" *Spatula.* Madam, I beg pardon, I only  
" meant to say, that, judging of the symmetry  
" and beautiful proportion of your person, I  
" should presume you would be—a—fine sub-  
" ject—

" *Mrs. Poplin.* For what Sir?

" *Spatula.* A fine subject for a lecture.

" *Mrs. Poplin.* Why, you old broken galli-  
" pot—you bit of dry lint—you scrap of an  
" apothecary—who have killed more people in  
" the parish than ever liv'd there—how dare  
" you bother me with your nonsense?—Ana-  
" tomize me!—Look ye, Mr. Spatula, if  
" you ever dare even to *think* about my bones  
" again, take care of your own—you old  
" animal!"

*Enter STATELY.*

*Stately.* Hey day, Mrs. Poplin!—why you  
" seem to be rehearsing with a great deal of ani-  
" mation.

*Mrs. Poplin.* I hope, Sir, I never want  
" animation, when a proper *subject* presents it-  
" self.

C

" *Spatula.*



" *Spatula.* The best *subject* I ever remember was at *Surgeon's-Hall*—it was a case the most extraordinary—in the year—

" *Mrs. Poplin.* What signifies the *year*?—  
" I'll not stay an *hour* in the room if you don't quit it immediately.

" *Spatula.* It was a *case* of *murder*—but, thou *killing* creature, I obey.

" [*Exit Spatula.*"]

*Stately.* And now, *Mrs. Poplin*, you must soon give us a proof of your animation—some of your audience are below, strutting about among a groupe of gaping rustics, in all the incumbrance of their best suits, like so many *court cards*, distinguish'd from the rest of the pack by their awkward finery! He! he! he!—by their awkward finery!

*Mrs. Poplin.* Ah now, that is pity—I told 'em to come quite *undress'd*, with nothing but their every-day clothes on.

*Stately.* With respect to the choice of your subject, you will not take my advice ill—but—

*Mrs. Poplin.* Take it ill!—Oh no—'Tis ten to one if I take it at all—You must know I like to chuse for myself, *Mr. Stately*—The pathetic is my forte—A sentimental story makes one so charmingly miserable—Oh, I love to touch the feelings—and my voice has power, *Mr. Stately.*

*Stately.*

*Stately.* Great power, indeed, Madam—you must have improved it by constant exercise.

*Mrs. Poplin.* Sterne is my favourite author—if you were to hear me read his story of Maria—and then his tale of Le Fevre—and then his Uncle Toby—Oh, how I doat upon his Toby!

*Re-enter SPATULA:*

*Spatula.* Cruel beauty!—The neighbours are come to have a *dose* of your reading—  
[Enter a number of Country People whimsically dressed.]

*Mrs. Poplin.* Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient.—Mr. Gewgaw, I am mighty glad to see you—and you too, neighbour Furrow.—Ah, my dear Miss Figg.—Mr. Rushlight, many thanks for this favour. [They converse in dumb shew.]—[Enter Bootekin, Bob Bootekin, Wilmot, Charlotte, and Kitty, followed by a number of Bootekin's friends, dressed as ridiculously as the others.]

*Bootekin.* Your servant, Madam—Here we are come to hear you and my nephew Bob knock the hard words about.—Bob, this is Mrs. Poplin.

*Wilmot.* Now is your time, my dear Charlotte, you see your father's attention is engaged—

ed—slip into the next room, and I'll follow you—*[Exit Charlotte.]*—“Our sole dependance  
 “is on you, Kitty—keep the old man from  
 “following us—and in case he should be  
 “very troublesome, remember what we have  
 “agreed upon.—Now kind fortune smile but  
 “for once!”

*[Exit.]*

*Bootekin.* Come, let us lose no time—let's have the Readings first, and Sam Scrape may give us ‘hail-stones’ bye and-bye.—Bob, are you sure your pipe is in order—suppose you suck an orange.—Make room there, they are just going to begin.

*Mrs. Poplin.* And pray, Sir, of what author do you mean to give us a specimen?

*Bob.* 'Tis perfectly the same to me, Ma'am—all subjects, and all styles, are alike to us public speakers.

*Bootekin.* Suppose, Bob, you give us that speech out of *Romeo*, which made your cousin Charlotte cry last night—Egad—suppose, Mrs. Poplin and you give us a scene—a confab between *Romeo* and *Juliet*—a bit of love discourse, eh?—What say you, Mrs. Poplin?

*Bob.* I have no objection, if the lady has none.

*Mrs. Poplin.* Oh dear, no, Sir—*[Aside to Stately.]*—I am quite at home in *Juliet*—I used

to



to perform the character to a few select friends—and was told I did it to a miracle.

*Stately.* I dare say it was a wonderful performance.—

*Bob.* Here, Madam, is an edition of the play, in which I have obliterated many of the less important passages—taken out all the nonsense of Shakespear. [*Mrs. Poplin and Bob seat themselves.*]

*Bootekin.* Silence there!—Now for it, Bob.

*Mrs. Poplin.* Shall I begin, Sir?

*Bob.* No, Ma'am—I begin, if you please.—

‘But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

‘It is the east!—and Juliet is the sun!

‘Oh! that I were a glove upon that hand,

‘That I might touch that cheek!’

*Bootekin.* Bravo! bravo!—there, Mr. Stately! there is power—did you ever hear any body read so loud in your life? “What d’ ye say to that, Charlotte?”—[*Turning round to look for Charlotte, Kitty stops him.*]

“*Kitty.* Hush, my dear Sir—you’ll interrupt Mrs. Poplin.”

*Mrs. Poplin.* [*Reading.*] ‘Ah me!’

*Spatula.* O dulcissime!

*Bob.* [*Reading.*] ‘She speaks!

‘O speak again, bright angel—for

‘Thou art as glorious to this sight, being  
 ‘O’er my head, as is a winged messenger  
 ‘From heaven unto the white, upturned  
 ‘Wondering eye of mortals, that fall  
 ‘Back to gaze on him, when he  
 ‘Besrides the lazy pacing clouds,  
 ‘And sails upon the bosom of the air.’

*Mrs. Poplin.* [Reading] ‘Oh Romeo, Romeo!  
 ‘wherefore art thou Romeo?—Deny’—

*Bob.* *Reading, and interrupting her.*  
 ‘Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?’

*Mrs. Poplin.* Hear more!—Aye to be sure.—  
 Why, Sir, I have not *half* finished the speech.—

“*Bootekin.* But where the devil is Charlotte?”

“*Kitty.* I tell you, Sir, you’ll interrupt the  
 “Readings,—there is your nephew beginning.”

*Bob.* Let me go on, Ma’am—[Reading]  
 ‘I take thee at thy word,  
 ‘Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptiz’d,  
 ‘Henceforth I *never* will be Romeo.’

“*Stately.* A very judicious resolution,  
 egad!”

*Mrs. Poplin.* Upon my word, young gentleman, this is mighty pretty—you have scratched out all Juliet’s speeches—you have all the *reading* to yourself—if this is a dialogue, it is a dialogue where only one person speaks.

*Bob.*

*Bob.* [*Aside*] She is nettled at the applause I have received.

*Mrs. Poplin.* [*Reading.*]

‘Thou know’st the mask of night is on my face,

‘Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek

‘For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night:

‘Fain wou’d I dwell on form, fain, fain deny

‘What I have *spoke*—but farewell compliment—

*Bob.* A *farewell* compliment! so it seems, indeed.—You see, Ma’am, the author—

*Mrs. Poplin.* Sir, I don’t care for the author, nor you neither—here are my friends come to hear me read, and they shan’t be disappointed.

“*Bootekin.* Charlotte gone, and Captain Wilmot gone too!—Oh, Lord, my mind misgives me—[*to Kitty*] Let me alone, husband, I will find her.

“*Kitty.* [*Aside*] Then I must e’en put our scheme in practice. [*Exit.*”

*Mrs. Poplin.* Sir, I say I will go on.

[*To Bob.*

*Bob.* Nay, Ma’am, if you come to that, so will I. — Now, *lungs*, do your office. [*both reading together.*]

*Bootekin.* Confound ye both—can’t ye be quiet for a moment—I have lost my daughter! —“Come here, Bob—and let us go.

*Enter*



*Enter KITTY.*

" *Kitty.* Aye, Sir, you'll go—before a justice presently—here are a posse of constables, with a warrant to apprehend us for reading in a public-house.—[*Two or three constables come in, and seize Bootekin and Bob—Stately, Spatula, and country people go off in the utmost confusion.*]

" *Bootekin.* Oh! my unlucky fortune—at these years to be taken up before the justices! I, who was in hopes to have made one of the quorum!

" *Mrs. Poplin.* A fig for the justices!—To interrupt one's Readings in this manner!

" *Bootekin.* Oh, a plague on your Readings! —I don't believe I shall ever bear the sight of a book again—there is my daughter Charlotte lost."

*Enter CHARLOTTE and WILMOT.*

" *Wilmot.* Pardon me, Sir—here is your daughter, and my wife.

*Bootekin.* Your wife?

" *Wilmot.* [*To the constables.*] You may retire—I have settled this matter with the justices."

"justices."—In short, Sir, this lady and myself have finished our *English Readings* in the next room from the *Chapter of Matrimony*.

*Mrs. Poplin.* I give you joy, Mr. Bootekin, of your *English Readings*—a pretty spot of work you have made of it!—i'faith, if you had been born on my side of the water, and learn to blunder from your infancy, you could not have done it more naturally.

"*Bootekin.* [*Afide*] I can't bear to be taunted by her.—[*To Bob*] You careless dog, 'twas all your fault—

"*Bob.* My fault!

"*Bootekin.* Don't mutter, firrah—though, on second thoughts I'd have you make a speech on the subject—

"*Bob.* Not I, indeed, uncle—I am one of those orators who always speak best when they don't care a straw about their subject.

*Enter SPATULA and STATELY.*

"*Mrs. Poplin.* Well, Mr. Spatula, I suppose you have heard the whole story.

"*Spatula.* Yes, I find that young couple have agreed to take a compound of Hymen's comforts—Ah, Madam, if you would but suffer your humble servant to make up a draught of ditto for you.

*Mrs.*

*Mrs. Poplin.* Whenever I take that medicine, Mr. Spatula, you may depend upon not being my apothecary.

*Stately.* Never mind 'em, Spatula—you can still be Romeo's apothecary.—You had better go on with the play, and sell the poor lad some rats-bane.—Ah, Bootekin, if you had not been a vulgar man, this wou'd not have happen'd to you."

*Bootekin.* [To Wilmot.] And you promise to make a gentlewoman of Charlotte, and that she shall take place of Mrs. Poplin?

*Wilmot.* Sir, I'll introduce your daughter to all the people of rank in the country—"she shall dance with a peer at the next race ball; and make such a figure that Mrs. Poplin shall break her heart with vexation in a fortnight."

*Bootekin.* Give me your hand.—Here, Charlotte—I forgive all that's past.—Bob, you're a blockhead—Mother Poplin, I begin to think you are a curst *low woman*—Old Spatula, you shall dine with me now and then, I shall want somebody to laugh at.—As for you, Jack Stately, I'm resolv'd to unburthen my conscience—you are a d—d fool—I've long'd to tell you so for ten years past, and now I have done it—so you may leave my legacy to the parish.

*Bob.* And what's to become of me, uncle?

*Bootekin.* Go to town, and make speeches.

*Bob.*



*Bob.* Faith I'll take your advice, and strive to lose my disappointment in the sweet intoxicating draught of public approbation.—Those who, like me, have been honour'd with its genial influence, can alone judge of the feelings excited by the *applauses* of an *audience*.

THE END.

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1864. The first of these was the  
to the Government in the West India  
causing interest in the West India  
which, like the others, have been found with the  
of the fact that the value of the fact  
has caused the value of the fact to be unknown.

D. N. D.



